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ABSTRACT

This guide was written for children, to help them handle problems they might encounter, learn about other children and how they have handled similar problems, and learn what to do when things go wrong or when they feel misunderstood. In the introduction, children are assured that, even when they have problems, they can be happy again. The body of the guide is organized into three major units. Unit I, focused on solving problems, encourages children to identify their problem, decide how to solve it, devise a plan, and implement the plan. Problems of two children are described within this framework and readers are given a blank framework to fill in concerning a problem of their own. Unit II explains how to rewrite a problem in order to think about it in a different, more positive way. Readers are given a problem and asked to rewrite it. Examples of rewrites are provided. Four vignettes of problems are included. For each vignette, a problem is identified, as are ways the children could change the problem situations. Unit III is designed to help children take care of themselves. Issues addressed in this unit include talking with others, self-esteem, sharing happiness, getting attention, support systems, eating properly, getting enough exercise, and relaxation. The guide ends with a quick review and a contract for children to sign, resolving to learn how to solve problems effectively. (NB)

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PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS FOR CHILDREN

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PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS FOR CHILDREN

Bettie B. Youngs, Ph.D.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction..... 1

UNIT I: SOLVING PROBLEMS

Solving Problems..... 4

Peter: Other Children Call Me Names..... 6

Susan: My Homework Isn't Done..... 7

How I Solve Problems..... 8

UNIT II: REWRITING PROBLEMS

Rewriting Problems..... 11

Maria: Other Children Don't Like Me..... 13

Edward: I Am Nervous In Front of the Class..... 21

Brad: I Have Too Many Things To Do..... 28

Zach: My Parents Like My Brother and Sister More..... 36

UNIT III: TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Talking with Others..... 44

Caring for Your Self-Esteem..... 48

Sharing Your Happiness..... 51

Getting Attention..... 54

Support Systems..... 56

Eating Properly..... 60

Getting Enough Exercise..... 62

Four Ways to Relax..... 64

Review..... 69

A Contract..... 71

INTRODUCTION

Are you happy right now? How do you feel? Are you glad to be you? I certainly hope so. It's a lot of fun to be young. You get to play with your friends. You get to learn fun, new things at school. Your parents do nice things for you. Sometimes it seems as if life is just great.

But, sometimes life is not too fun. Sometimes you are sad, or want to cry. Can you remember when someone hurt your feelings? Do you remember being hurried? Are you ever so busy that you get worried and upset? Maybe you have had a bad day. We all have times when we are unhappy or worried. That's normal. But, it's important to know what to do when things are not so wonderful. And that's what this book is about.

In PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS FOR CHILDREN, you are going to learn how to handle some problems. You will learn about other children your age. They have had the same kinds of problems you have. This book shows you what to do when things go wrong. You will learn what to do when no one understands you. Even when you have problems, you CAN be happy again.

Are you ready to learn how to become less worried and upset? Are you ready to learn how to handle problems? Are you ready to learn to be relaxed and happy? Good! Let's begin now.

UNIT I

SOLVING PROBLEMS

SOLVING PROBLEMS

Everyone has problems. That's the bad news. The good news is that problems can be solved. Nothing is as bad as it seems. There are solutions. Here is one way to make things better. When you have a problem, ask yourself these questions. ***What is the problem? How can I solve it? What is my plan? How did I do?*** Asking these questions in this order will help you solve problems. Here's how it works.

1. What is the problem?

Ask yourself, "What is the problem?" Probably, this is the easiest step. Let's say your classmate called you a cruel name. That's a problem because it makes you feel bad. Now you will have to figure out what to do.

2. How can I solve it?

There are many ways to solve a problem. The more ways you can think of, the better. If one way does not work well, another might. To start, find two very different things that you could do. For example, if someone is calling you names, you can ignore the names, or yell back, calling him names also.

Next, think of all the other ways you could solve this problem. Don't worry whether the ideas would make the problem go away. In fact, some of your ideas may be a little silly! Maybe one way to solve the name calling problem is to dump a bowl of spaghetti over your classmate's head! Some ideas might be wrong, like punching or hitting the person. Some ideas might be good, like trying to talk out the problem. For now, think of ALL the solutions you can.

3. What is my plan?

Now you have discovered a lot of different things you might do. The next step is to select one. Which one will work best for YOU? For example, a good way of solving the name calling problem would be to ask the person to stop calling you names. Tell that person that it hurts your feelings. Make a plan. Decide *what* you are going to do. Then, decide *when* you will do it.

4. How did I do?

After you have done what you planned, think about what happened. Did it work the way you wanted? Did the other person stop calling you names? If so, your problem is solved. If not, choose another solution and try again.

---How Peter Solved His Problem---

Peter used these steps to solve his problem. Let's see how these steps worked for him.

1. What is the problem?

Danny called me 'stupid' and it made me mad!

2. How can I solve it?

I could call him 'stupid' back.
I could punch him.
I could tell him how angry it makes me.
I could ignore it.

3. What is my plan?

I'm going to tell him to stop name-calling. I'll tell him on the bus tomorrow morning.

4. How did I do?

My plan worked great. I said it politely and I didn't get in a fight. Danny said he was sorry.

---How Susan Solved Her Problem---

Here is how Susan used these steps.

1. What is the problem?

My homework isn't done, and I have to leave for school in a few minutes.

2. How can I solve it?

I could get my parents or my brother to help me.
I could ask the teacher for more time to turn it in.
I could start doing the homework right now and try to finish by school time.

3. What is my plan?

I will begin my homework right now and see how much I can get done.

4. How did I do?

I finished the assignment. I didn't get a chance to check my answers. My paper is not as neat as I would like. Next time, I am going to get my homework done sooner.

---How I Solve Problems---

Now you try it. Think of a problem you have. Use these steps to solve your problem.

1. What is your problem?

_____

_____

2. How can you solve it?

_____

_____

_____

3. What is your plan?

_____

_____

4. How did you do?

_____

_____

UNIT II

REWRITING PROBLEMS

REWRITING PROBLEMS

Another way to solve problems is to rewrite them. To "rewrite" a problem is to think about it in a different, more positive way. *Your thoughts determine how you solve the problem.* For example, maybe you don't like how you look. If you were to write your problem down, what would you say? You might say something like, "I don't like the way I look." You might look only at the bad things about yourself. Instead, think of the good things, too.

Do you see how different these two ways are? You could accept a problem and say, "Well, I can't change. That's just the way it is!" Instead, you could say, "It's not all that bad. I have a chance to make things better."

Try rewriting a problem now. Read the problem below. Then, rewrite it in a better way.

PROBLEM: School is too hard for me.

REWRITE: _____

_____

How did you do? There are many ways you could have rewritten this problem. For example, you could have said:

REWRITE: "I really like most of my subjects in school, but math is hard. I like to do additions and subtractions, but multiplications are hard for me. I need to get more help with multiplications. Maybe my teacher can spend more time with me. I'll ask."

Everyone has problems at one time or another. As you read about each of the children on the following pages, try to think of all the ways to help them solve their problems. Then, after you read about how they chose to solve their problems, think about the results.

Do you think the problem was solved in the best way? Could you have suggested a different, better way?

MARIA

"The other kids don't like me!"

Maria is 7 years old. She is very tall for her age. She is taller than all the other children, even the boys. The other children call her names like "beanpole" and "skyscraper." Sharon and Paula call her those names often. Maria tries to be friendly with everyone. But, no one wants to be her friend. She says to her mother, "None of the others like me! All they do is tease me and call me names! When I try to join in, they give me dirty looks. Sometimes I walk into a room and everyone giggles." Maria has started shouting names back at Sharon and Paula.

Maria is upset. It is no fun being unpopular. Everyone wants to be liked, to have friends. What can Maria do about it?

---How Can This Problem Be Solved?---

1. What is the problem?

Maria wrote her problem like this:

PROBLEM: <u>No one likes me.</u>

Maria thinks the other children don't like her. But is that really the problem? Maria has to be *sure* that what *she* thinks is the problem, *really* is the problem. Is she really unpopular? Maybe she is just as popular as everyone else. Maybe the other children do like her, and she just thinks that they don't. Maria needs to think carefully about what is going on. She could ask herself questions like these:

- Have I tried to be friendly with the others? Have I talked to them, or do I wait for them to come up to me?

- Why do others stop talking when I join them? Is it because they were talking about me? Or, is it because they are just being polite? Maybe they are stopping so that I can join in a new conversation.

- Am I sure that they are looking and laughing at me? Or are they laughing at something else?

Can you think of other questions Maria might think about in solving her problem?

- _____

- _____

2. Rewrite the problem

The next step is for Maria to rewrite her problem in a truthful way. See if you can help. Rewrite Maria's problem here.

_____

_____

Here's how Maria rewrote her problem.

REWRITE: I want to be friends with Sharon and Paula, but I don't think they want to be friends with me.

The rewrite makes the problem better. It doesn't solve it. But, it shows that things aren't as bad as they seem. It's not that everyone dislikes Maria. It's just that *those* two girls might not want to be her friends. It's too bad, but it is a fact of life. Sometimes, not everyone gets along.

Maria can accept that some children may not like her. And, she can see if *she* is really being a good friend. When Maria stops shouting back, for example, the other children will like to be around her again. They will want to be her friends. They will stop calling her names that hurt her feelings.

3. Change the Situation

Now Maria is ready to change the situation. Maria will need to make a plan to solve the problem. Then she will need to follow the plan. If it doesn't work, she will need to try another plan. Maria might decide to ignore the names. Or, she might decide that she has better friends than Paula and Sharon.

What else could Maria do? How else could Maria change the situation? List three things she might do to change the situation.

- _____

_____

- _____

_____

- _____

_____

Here's what Maria did.

CHANGE THE SITUATION: Maria decided to stop shouting names back at Sharon and Paula. She made a special effort to be nice to them. And, she spent more time with her other friends. Soon she was popular again.

---Do You Have This Problem, Too?---

Are you thinking, "Well, that was easy. Maria solved her problem. But my problems are harder! I'm not doing anything wrong. The other kids are just mean to me. No one likes me. I don't know why!"

Maybe everyone in the room has a best friend but you. Maybe no one sits next to you in the cafeteria or on the bus. Or maybe you are picked on but you don't know why. Maybe someone is your friend for only a few days at a time.

Try this. First, make a list of the children who DO like you and those who DON'T like you. No one but you is going to see this list. Who seems to like you? Who smiles when they see you coming? Write those names on the LIKE ME list. Who does not like you? Who walks away from you or teases you and calls you names? Write whose names on the DON'T LIKE ME list.

LIKE ME	DON'T LIKE ME
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

All done? Good. Now, choose one name from the LIKE ME list and one from the DON'T LIKE ME list. Any two names will do. You can close your eyes and just point to one.

Now think about how YOU treat THEM.

- Do you act differently around people who like you? Are you friendly and outgoing? Maybe you help them with their homework. You are nice to them.

- How do you treat the people who seem to NOT like you? Are you nervous around them? Do you frown at them instead of smiling at them? Do you tease them or maybe poke them? If they don't like to be teased or poked, they will not like you very much.

Can you see how differently you treat people? When you are nice to someone and show that person that you like her, she will probably be nice to you. While there are

some children who do not like you, there are many others who do.

You may want to go back now and write down the names of all the children in your class. This way, you can see how many friends really do like you. You will see that you *do* have as many names in the LIKE ME column as in the DON'T LIKE ME column.

Remember, even young people have the power to change things. You have control over the way you act. You can treat your friends better. YOU can solve your problems.

LIKE ME	**DON'T LIKE ME**
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

EDWARD

"I am nervous when I have to talk in front of the class."

There are many times when you have to get up in front of the class. Sometimes you give reports. Sometimes you go to the chalkboard and solve a math problem. When you are up there, are you ever scared? Maybe you have butterflies in your stomach. Maybe your stomach hurts. Maybe you feel all hot and sweaty. Maybe you shake. Maybe you are like Edward.

Edward had to give an oral book report on Monday. Edward had read the book. He knew what he wanted to say. But, he didn't want to stand in front of the class. "I don't like being up there all by myself," he said. "Everyone is staring at me. I forget what I was going to say. Then I look stupid and everyone laughs at me."

Edward was so upset he pretended to be sick. He stayed home the day he was supposed to give the report. When he went back to school on Tuesday, the teacher told him he would have to give the report on Friday. Edward only postponed his report. Now he has another four days to worry!

---How Can This Problem Be Solved?---

1. What is the problem?

What do you think Edward's problem is?

_____

_____

Edward wrote his problem as:

PROBLEM: I can't talk in front of the class.

Edward's problem seems obvious. He doesn't want to get in front of the class and give a report. But WHY does he get so nervous? It's not that he didn't do his homework. He knows what he wants to say. He is worried that he will make a mistake when everyone stares at him. If a person is nervous because he is unprepared, that is a different problem. I bet you can figure out the solution to that problem: Do the homework!

2. Rewrite the problem

Remember the rewriting skill you learned earlier when talking about Maria's problem? You can use this same

skill now to help Edward. How could Edward rewrite the problem?

_____

_____

Here's how he did it:

REWRITE: I am afraid when I talk in front of the class, but so is almost everyone else. And everyone in the class is my friend.

Notice how the rewrite makes the problem easier to understand and accept. Edward must realize that everyone is a little worried and nervous speaking in front of a group. Even famous actors and actresses are scared right before they go on stage. Probably the President of the United States is a little nervous before he talks to Congress. There is nothing to be ashamed of if you are nervous. I bet almost everyone in your class has the same problem. Don't be embarrassed or afraid to admit it.

3. Change the situation

Just because everyone has a nervous stomach does not mean you like having a nervous stomach. Of course you

don't! It's no fun feeling that way. Edward decided to change things. Here's what Edward did.

CHANGE THE SITUATION: Edward talked to his teacher first. But, she told him that she understood his problem, but that everyone had to give reports. He couldn't get out of it. That wouldn't be fair to the others. She did agree to let him give it sitting at his desk. He didn't have to stand in front of the others. Everyone was still looking at him, but he was a little more comfortable.

Edward did a smart thing. He TALKED about his feelings to someone. Since he was scared of something to do with school, he talked to his teacher. It wasn't easy for him. He didn't want to admit he was scared. But once he talked to the teacher, he found out two things. First, he learned that he HAD to give the report. What good did knowing that do? Edward did not waste time thinking of how to get out of giving the report. He didn't put off preparing the report. Second, he learned that there could be compromise. He did have to GIVE the report. But he could give it from his desk.

---Do You Have This Problem, Too?---

How do YOU feel about talking in front of the class? Complete the exercise.

When I have to talk in front of the class, I feel

_____

_____.

Now you know how you feel. It's time to think of what you can do. Write three things you can do.

- _____

_____

- _____

_____

- _____

_____

Here are some other suggestions.

1. Talk to your teacher. Maybe you can find a way to give the report that will be less frightening. Tell your teacher how you feel. She might be willing to help you. Maybe you and a friend could share the report. Maybe

two of you up there is not as frightening as giving the report alone. Maybe she will let you give your report first thing in the morning. That way you don't have to worry about it all day. There are many ways that things can be made better. But no one can help you unless you talk about what is wrong.

2. Talk to your parents. Your parents understand you more than anyone else does. They know when you are worried or unhappy. It hurts them to see you that way. They are eager to help you. Talk to them about your nervousness. They will probably tell you how they were nervous, too, when they were in school. It helps to know that you are not the only one. They can also help you find ways to work out your problem.

3. Try role playing. Do you ever pretend to be someone you are not? Maybe you dress up and pretend to be a pirate or a princess or a doctor. Maybe you daydream about being an explorer. When you pretend to be someone you are not, you are role playing. Role playing can help you practice your report and become less nervous. In front of your parents and family or in front of the mirror alone, pretend that you are giving the report. But, instead of being you, you are the President of the United States. Pretend that everyone is eager to hear what you have to say. Maybe you are an actor, playing a part. Pretend you are your favorite movie or TV star. Everyone in the class

is your audience. If you are someone else, then everyone in class is looking at that someone else, not at you.

4. Be your best. There is something else you can do, too. You can plan to be at your very best that day. Get a good night of rest. Plan a special breakfast. Lay out what you want to wear (you want to look your best) the night before. Allow plenty of time to prepare that next morning. Being your best is always a great feeling!

BRAD

"I have too many things I have to do."

Do you sometimes feel as if you are just too busy? You have school during the day. You have homework at night. You have chores around the house. Maybe you have piano lessons and soccer practice. You do a lot of things with your parents. Your brothers and sisters are always asking you for help. When do you get the time to do things that YOU really want to do? Maybe you want to watch a little TV, or read a book, or talk on the telephone to a friend. But, you don't have the time. When you feel too busy, you can get pressured and become upset and worried and unhappy. Maybe you feel like Brad.

Brad goes to school from 8:00 to 2:30 every weekday. He has soccer practice from 2:45 to 4:15 three days a week. When he gets home, around 4:30, he has to do his chores. Then he has dinner with his family. Then he does his homework. By that time, he is ready to go to bed. He almost never gets to ride his bike with his friends these days. He is even busy on the weekends. He has a soccer game. He has homework. He also has to help take care of his younger brother and sisters. Brad feels as though everyone is telling him what to do. He feels as though he will never get everything done. He is worried that he never has any fun doing the things HE really wants to do.

---How Can This Problem Be Solved?---

1. What is the problem?

Brad is a very busy boy. He often complains, "I have no time!" Brad was beginning to feel tired all the time. He knew he had to solve this problem.

Here's how Brad stated his problem.

PROBLEM: "I am too busy. I don't have time to do things I really want to do."

2. Rewrite the problem

By now you are getting to be very good at writing and then rewriting a problem. Help Brad rewrite his problem. Remember, look on the bright side.

_____

_____

_____

Here's how Brad rewrote the problem:

REWRITE: I wish I had more time to do things I enjoy. But, I do like to be busy. It's fun. I like to do well in school. I like to play soccer with my friends. I am proud that my parents think I am responsible. I'm happy I can be so helpful.

3. Change the situation

Now it's time for Brad to solve his problem. This time you help Brad. What are all of the ways Brad could change his situation. For example, maybe Brad's parents could hire a babysitter for their other children for some of the time. Then, Brad could have more time to himself. What else could he do to solve the problem?

---Do You Have This Problem, Too?---

Does this sound like your life? Are you often in a hurry or rushed? Are you so busy that you never have time to do something you want to do? Do you often feel nervous and upset? We call this stress. Stress is the feeling that things are too much for you to handle.

Are you feeling that way now? You might have a big science report that is taking more time than usual. Maybe you have to prepare for a recital or for a special sports event. If it is something unusual, you know that it will soon be over. Soon, things will be back to normal.

However, sometimes there is nothing in particular that is wrong. Sometimes there is simply too much to do. This was true for Brad. He didn't take on anything new. He was just always busy. Sometimes, there is nothing you can do about being busy. You are not going to stop going to school just because you feel tired. Your chores are not going to go away. Sometimes, you just need a better way to *manage* your time.

Each of us has the same number of hours in a day. The important thing about time is *what you do with it*. If you waste it, soon your time is gone, and you have done little. If you plan your time wisely, you can do the things you

HAVE to do. You will even have time left for some of the things you WANT to do.

A good way to manage time is to use a daily plan. On a piece of paper, write down what you are going to do each day. Here's how Brad planned his day.

BRAD'S DAILY PLAN

MORNING ACTIVITIES

____ Wake up at 7:15
____ Brush teeth, wash face
____ Make bed
____ Get dressed for school
____ Feed my dog Bonzo
____ Have breakfast
____ Help clear the dishes off the table
____ Make sure homework and books are ready
____ Go to school

AT SCHOOL

____ Class #1
____ Class #2
____ Class #3
____ Class #4
____ Class #5

AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

____ Feed and walk Bonzo
____ Have a snack
____ Go to soccer practice
____ Do chores
____ Have dinner
____ Do homework
____ Get ready for bed (take a bath, brush teeth)

SPECIAL THINGS TO DO

____ Write Grandma and Grandpa a letter

Is this list like one you would make? Are there things there that you do every day? Are there things that you do that are not on the list? That's natural. This is only an example. Everyone has a different day. Make up a list of your own.

MY DAILY PLAN

MORNING ACTIVITIES

____ _____
____ _____
____ _____
____ _____
____ _____

AT SCHOOL

____ _____
____ _____
____ _____
____ _____
____ _____

AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

____ _____
____ _____
____ _____

SPECIAL THINGS TO DO

____ _____
____ _____

Now you can see how many things you do during the day. You can tell more about where your time goes. For example, do you know how long it takes you to get dressed? Do you waste time every morning trying on different clothes? Maybe you could lay out your clothes before you go to bed at night. That way, they are ready for you to put on in the morning. You won't have to waste time thinking of what to wear.

Maybe you waste time on your chores. Maybe you do them slowly because you don't want to do them. No one really likes to wash dishes for example. But, you could do them a little more quickly if you tried, couldn't you?

You can also look at what you do during the day. See what you could do differently. Instead of watching TV, why not do your homework first? That way, you will be less tired. You can think faster and get it done quicker. That will leave you more time for doing other fun things later.

Remember, plan to use your time wisely. This leaves you more time for you.

ZACH

"My parents like my brother and sister more than they like me."

When a family has more than one child, it often seems as though the parents have "favorites." Your mom and dad tell you they love all their children exactly the same. But, you sometimes feel that they love your brothers and sisters more than they love you. You know deep in your heart that your parents love you as much. But sometimes you can't help worrying. You worry that you are the least favorite. You worry that maybe your parents are sorry they have you. You worry that they would be happier with just their other children. Feelings like this, even when you know they aren't true, can make you unhappy. That is how Zach feels.

Zach has an older brother and a younger sister. He sometimes feels that his parents love his big brother best. Zach's brother is older and can be left alone. Zach thinks, "No one has to get a babysitter for Mark. My parents like having him because he can be left alone." Zach's younger sister, Belinda, takes a lot of his parent's attention. "The baby is so little and cute, and my parents are always with her. No one ever spends much time with me anymore. My parents love Mark and Belinda more than they love me. They don't even want me around!"

---How Can This Problem Be Solved?---

1. What is the problem?

Zach feels left out. He thinks that his parents love his brother and sister more than they love him. Zach is feeling sad. Here's how Zach wrote his problem:

PROBLEM: "My parents love my brother and sister more than they love me."

2. Rewrite the problem

Could Zach be mistaken about how much his parents love him? What other ways could Zach look at his problem? Rewrite the problem for Zach.

_____

_____

Here's how Zach did his rewrite:

REWRITE: My parents love me a lot. When they spend a lot of time and attention with my brother and my sister, I feel hurt and jealous.

3. Change the situation

How could Zach make the problem better?

_____

_____

_____

There is always something you can do to make things better. Here's what Zach decided to do.

CHANGE THE SITUATION: I talked with my parents. They thought that I didn't WANT to spend more time with them.

Zach's mother said, "Honey, we noticed that every time we hugged you, you seemed embarrassed. You kept telling us you were too big for that. We never meant to hurt your feelings. We love you as much as we love your brother and sister. And we're very glad that you told us how you are feeling."

---Do You Have This Problem, Too?---

Have you ever felt the way Zach does? Have you ever thought your parents love their other children more than they love you?

Are you worried that your parents do have a favorite child, and that child is not you? Your problem may be that you feel left out and not as loved.

Do you know why you feel this way? Ask yourself these questions:

- Do my parents hug and kiss me as much as they do my brothers and sisters?

- Do I feel jealous when my parents hug and kiss my brothers and sisters?

- Do I expect my parents to spend more time with me than they do with my brothers and sisters?

Talk with your parents. Your parents love you every bit as much as they love their other children. That is a fact. However, your feelings are real too. Even if you tell yourself that they are silly feelings, they are important to you. Do not feel guilty about how you feel. Look for a

way to solve your problem. Here's a plan for doing that. Ask yourself:

• **WHY do I think my parents love my brothers and sisters more than they love me?** For one week, write down all the nice things your parents do for you. Write down all the loving things they say to you. Probably, they do all sorts of things for you. You may take those things for granted because your parents have been doing them for so long. Maybe you only notice the nice things they do for their other children. Instead, notice all the things they do for you, too. This list will help you see that your parents care for you. They do just as much for you as they do for your brothers and sisters.

Nice Things My Parents Do For Me . . .

- Sometimes my parents make a special trip to the store to get me something I need for a class project.
- Sometimes my parents make my favorite meal for dinner.
- Sometimes my parents watch television with me, even though it's not their favorite show.

Other things they do for me that make me feel special . . .

- _____
- _____
- _____

Nice Things My Parents Say To Me . . .

- "You did a very nice job cleaning your room."
- "What a wonderful score on your spelling test! We're so proud of you!"
- "You are such a well-mannered child.
- "I'm so lucky to have you!"

Other things they say to make you feel special . . .

- _____
- _____
- _____

You should feel better knowing how much your parents care about you. You need to reassure yourself that you are important to your parents. TALK with your parents. Tell them how you feel. Don't be embarrassed or afraid to be honest with them. They want to hear what you are thinking and feeling. Sometimes, your mom and dad don't know how you feel unless you tell them.

UNIT III

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

You have been learning about problems and how to solve them. Of course, these are not the *only* problems children have. And these are not the only *solutions*, either. Here are some ways that can work for all sorts of problems.

---Talking with Others---

Talking with others is called communicating. How good are you at communicating? Can you say what you need? Can you talk to your parents and tell them how you feel? Do you tell others how you feel? Do you tell people what you want? Or do you let others do whatever they want, even if it hurts your feelings?

Maybe this is something you have never thought about. Take a few minutes to answer these questions. When you are done, read your answers several times. Remember, think about how you feel and what you want. Here we go.

1. A girl asks to cut in front of you in a line. You don't want to let her cut. What do you say?

_____

_____

2. Your brother/sister wants to watch a special TV program. He/she walks over to change the channel. What do you say?

_____

_____

3. A classmate asks to copy your answers to a test. You don't want him to. What do you say?

_____

_____

4. The teacher asks the entire class to stay after school because someone was talking. You don't want to take the blame for something you know isn't your fault. What do you say?

_____

_____

5. Your sister wants to borrow your favorite record. Your sister is careless with her records. You're afraid the record will get scratched or broken. What do you say?

_____

_____

6. You are watching a TV movie that will end in ten minutes. Your dad/mom comes in and says you must go to bed immediately. What do you say?

_____

_____

7. A schoolmate is calling you names. What do you say?

_____

_____

8. You don't understand a problem the teacher has just explained. What do you say?

_____

_____

How did you do? Did you tell others when they hurt your feelings. Did you stand up for yourself? What can you do to tell people what you need?

_____

_____

_____

_____

CARING FOR YOUR SELF-ESTEEM

What you think about yourself is called SELF-ESTEEM. Your self-esteem is what you think of YOU.

Having a healthy esteem means that you value who you are. YOU care about YOU. You like what you are, and what you do. It means that you *respect* yourself.

How you see yourself has a lot to do with how you act. If you see yourself as strong, you will be able to speak up.

Your self-esteem is made up of the positive or negative thoughts and feelings you have about yourself. You might, for example, believe any of these things about yourself:

Positive

- I look good.
- I'm smart.
- I'm fit.
- I learn from my mistakes.
- I'm fun.
- I'm a good friend.

Negative

- I'm ugly.
- I'm stupid.
- I'm fat (skinny).
- I'm afraid.
- I'm boring.
- No one likes me.

The more positive feelings you have about yourself, the better your self-esteem is.

You are in charge of caring for your self-esteem. Keeping your self-esteem healthy is one of the most important things you can do for yourself.

Think well of yourself. Like yourself. Then you will do things that make your life better. If you think of yourself as smart, you will speak in class and enjoy class more. If you think of yourself as not very intelligent, you won't even try and you won't learn anything.

If you feel like a loyal friend, you will *act* thay way. You will *be* a good friend. If you think you are a good person, you will *behave* as a good person.

What you think about yourself is very important. It can make your whole life better. Each morning look in the

mirror and say, "I like myself. I like myself." Try it. You can't say it without smiling. That's a good feeling!

What are all the positive things that you feel about yourself?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What are all the positive things you can do to feel even better about yourself?

_____

_____

_____

_____

SHARING YOUR HAPPINESS

It's important to *find* the good things that YOU do. It is also important to *share* them with others. It is easy to tell people when we are unhappy. We must also tell them when we are happy. When you are happy, you feel better and you make others feel better, too. How happy are you when you cheer someone up? Try it. Soon they will be cheerful, too. Then one day when you are a little sad, they will cheer YOU up.

1. Describe what makes you feel good.

_____

_____

_____

2. Describe something you did that made someone else happy.

_____

_____

_____

3. Think of someone who made you feel good this week. What did that person do?

_____

_____

_____

Use sentences that start with these words to help you share your feelings:

I appreciate . . .
I liked it when you . . .
I missed you when . . .
It was really helpful when you . . .
When you . . . I . . .

Let's try this now. What can you say to make your parents feel good?

I appreciate_____

_____ .

I liked it when you _____

_____ .

I missed you when _____

_____ .

It was really helpful when you _____

_____ .

When you _____

I _____.

Try this with your grandparents. Try it with your friends.
Try it with your teachers. You will see how well it works!

GETTING ATTENTION

It's important to have friends. But just as important as having friends, is *being your own best friend.* Liking yourself is important. *How much* you like and respect yourself determines how you seek attention. If your self-esteem is good, you will learn how to get the attention you need in a positive way. How much love and affection and attention you get is very important. Of course, not everyone needs the same amount of love at the same time. For example, you may get your feelings hurt by being teased. But, someone else might enjoy being teased, liking the attention. The important thing is knowing what YOU need.

Think about these questions.

- **How much attention do you need?**
- **When do you need it?**
- **When do you really need a hug?**

Maybe you need a hug when your feelings have been hurt. Maybe you need a hug when you are feeling sick. You also need attention when you are in a very good mood, just as when you have been criticized or teased.

When you need attention, ask for it! We all need love and affection. There is nothing wrong with letting others know

that. Your parents love you more than anything else in the world. But, even your parents don't always know when you are unhappy and need an extra special hug. How do you let them know when you need attention? Do you:

- Pout until someone notices you?
- Act nicely, hoping they will pay more attention to you?
- Ask for attention?
- Get angry and upset?

Write down what you do to get attention:

- _____
- _____
- _____

What are better ways you can get attention?

- _____
- _____
- _____

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Your "support system" is made up of the people who help you. It includes your mom and dad, your brothers and sisters, your friends, your teachers, your grandmas and grandpas, favorite aunts and uncles. You may even have some others. Sometimes you may not realize just how ready and willing they are to help you. It can be very comforting to know that someone is on your side.

You know people who are eager to help you. Think about who they are. List each person.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Now pick a person who has helped you recently. What did he or she do to help. Here's what Brad wrote:

---Brad's Support System---

WHO: My Dad

WHAT: Yesterday I forgot my lunch money. My dad brought it to me even though he had to leave work and drive to school.

HOW: He wasn't angry. He didn't lecture me about being forgetful. He was concerned that I had enough money for lunch.

---My Support System ---

Now it's your turn. Who supports you? Name one person who helps you, and how that person shows it.

WHO: _____

_____

What does he or she do to support or help you?

WHAT: _____

_____

How does he or she let you know that he or she cares about YOU?

HOW: _____

_____

Isn't that a nice feeling? Now, try this exercise again. This time think about who YOU help.

---How I Help Others---

Who do you support? Name one person you help.

WHO: _____

_____

What do you do to show support?

WHAT: _____

_____

How do you let that person know that you care?

HOW: _____

_____

Helping someone else is an even better feeling, isn't it?

EATING PROPERLY

One of the most important things you can do is to take care of yourself! Yes, your parents take care of you. But, you have to help. The first thing you can do is eat right.

You can follow three simple rules for your diet.

1. Eat breakfast. You may be in a rush in the morning. You may think you don't have time to eat breakfast. Think again. Breakfast is the fuel that gets your body and brain going. A good breakfast can keep you alert all day long. Not eating breakfast is like expecting your family's car to run without any gas.

2. Eat enough food. Sometimes, especially when you are sick or tired or sad, you may just pick at your food and not eat very much. Because you are growing so rapidly, your body needs plenty of good food.

3. Eat the right foods. Your parents serve you the right foods. What do you eat when you are away from them? Do you accept junk food from a friend? If you eat the wrong food, it affects your body and your mind. Too much junk food upsets your body and can make you nervous and unhappy.

What else can you do to be sure you are eating properly?

- _____

_____

- _____

_____

- _____

_____

- _____

_____

GETTING ENOUGH EXERCISE

Another way to take care of yourself is with exercise. Exercise is very, very important. Think about how good you feel after recess. You have more energy after playing with friends. You feel good when you are running and jumping around!

When you exercise, your blood takes more oxygen to the brain. You can think better. Exercise also strengthens your muscles and your bones.

Exercise actually makes you LESS tired! You may think that you are too tired to exercise. But, exercise builds up your energy and stamina. It makes you feel more energetic. And when you are less tired, you feel happier.

What exercise do YOU like to do? List three things you enjoy (like riding your bike, roller skating, and swimming).

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Now, decide that you will do these things regularly. Each day get some exercise. It doesn't have to be the same things all the time. Today you may take a walk with your mom or dad. Tomorrow you may play Red Rover with your friends. The important thing is that you keep active.

What else can you do to get enough exercise?

- _____

_____

- _____

_____

- _____

_____

- _____

_____

FOUR WAYS TO RELAX

When you feel upset, RELAX! Do you know what the word RELAX means? When someone says to you, "Oh, just relax!" do you understand what you should do? To relax is to slow down, to calm down, to unwind. There are several ways you can relax.

---Deep Breathing---

Take a deep breath, as deep as you can. Really get a lot of air in you! As you let it out, can you feel yourself relaxing a little? By breathing deeply, you force yourself to slow down. You concentrate on one thing at a time. You stop running around doing ten things at once. Whenever you feel that things are too much, take several deep breaths. You can do this exercise anywhere, anytime. And no one has to know you are doing it!

Here are the steps:

1. Sit down. Get comfortable.
2. Close your eyes.
3. Take a deep breath in, as deep as you can.

4. Let the breath out slowlllllllllly . . . . .

5. Put your hands on your stomach and take another deep breath. Feel your stomach filling up with air.

6. Breathe out. Feel your stomach shrinking and letting the air out.

7. Do this several times.

8. Open your eyes.

9. Smile! Don't you feel better and more relaxed?

---Relaxing with Music---

You can also relax with music. What kind of music do you like? Choose a favorite soothing record or tape and put it on. Lean back on your bed or in a comfortable chair. Think of nothing but the music. Enjoy the sounds. Let the music fill your mind. Notice how you are relaxing. Notice how you are forgetting your problems. Your muscles are relaxing. Your body feels better, too.

You noticed that I said to use soothing, relaxing music. Relaxing is best with soothing music. The goal is to relax, not to become pumped up. Loud, energetic music will make you feel excited. Save that for those times when you want to be energetic.

---Relaxing Your Muscles---

When you are very busy, sometimes you get a headache and your muscles are tight. Has your neck ever felt stiff? You might tighten your jaw and rub your teeth together until your jaw aches. Your body tightens up. This can cause pain. You can stop the pain. The way to do this is called muscle relaxation.

You need to begin by concentrating on your muscles. Look at your hands. Clench your fist as tightly as you can. Go ahead, make a tight fist, really tight, right now! Now slowly open your hand and shake it out. Notice how good that feels? Stare at your hand and try to relax it until it is limp. Next, think about the muscles in your jaw. Open your mouth and let your jaw relax. Feel how comfortable that is?

Do the same for other muscles in your body. Concentrate on one area at a time. Relax your feet, then your calves, then your thighs, all the way to the top of your head and the tips of your fingers. Once you get good at this exercise, you can do it almost automatically. When you feel too busy and your muscles are tightening, slow down and relax them. You can do this exercise anywhere, even in your seat at school. All you need to do is think about the muscles and try to make them smooth.

---Using Your Imagination---

Remember we talked earlier about role playing? You pretended to be someone else, so that you wouldn't be nervous when you were in front of the class. You were using your imagination. You were seeing yourself doing something else or being somewhere else. That works for relaxing, too. For example, you could imagine that you are floating on a raft in a swimming pool. You could imagine that you are lying in your bed, under a warm cover. You could see yourself walking barefoot through the grass, smelling the flowers. Think of a time when you were calm and relaxed.

Remember when you were at the lake, lying in the sun? Can you remember when you were lying in the hammock at Grandma's? What were you thinking? Close your eyes and describe yourself in that same situation.

When you feel rushed, see yourself in a more comfortable and pleasant place. When you see yourself doing something you enjoy, you relax.

Try this right now. When are you relaxed and calm? Maybe when you are being held in your mother's or father's arms you feel safe and secure and comfortable. Maybe you love the few minutes right before you go to

bed, when you snuggle under the covers. Maybe you like to hug your kitten or dog. Close your eyes and see yourself doing that.

Doesn't that feel better? Don't you feel yourself calming down and relaxing?

REVIEW

What a lot you have learned! You learned that having problems is a part of life. Everyone has problems. Having problems is nothing to be afraid of. And, you learned HOW to better take care of you.

---Let's Review---

You learned a way to solve problems. Ask yourself:

What's the problem?
How can I solve it?
What's my plan?
How did I do?

Next, you saw several problems that children like you had. You read how they worked through their problems. You learned ways to solve problems. Some of these way included:

Rewriting the problem: Writing the problem so that it doesn't seem quite so bad. Look at the good parts, not just the bad parts.

Role playing: Pretending that you are someone else. This takes the pressure off you.

Using time wisely: Keeping track of your daily activities. You can see where you spend most of your time. You can plan your time better.

Talking with others: Expressing your feelings. Learning that it's okay that you need love and attention.

Caring for your self-esteem: Liking yourself, and treating yourself like you CARE about you.

Sharing your happiness: Sharing your good feelings with others.

Getting attention in a positive way: Learning how to get attention in a positive way. Learning how to ask and get the attention you need.

Support systems: Being able to identify all the people who are willing to be there for you.

Eating properly: Remembering how important it is to eat good foods and to take care of your body.

Getting enough exercise: Getting enough exercise every day to keep your body healthy.

Four ways to relax: Learning ways to relax your mind and body of pressures and problems.

A CONTRACT

Most problems don't magically disappear. You have to help. But, you can make your life a lot more fun! It's up to you! Here's a contract to help you.

A contract is a promise to yourself that you *will do* something. With your parents' help, fill out the contract.

---My Contract---

I, (name) _____, am agreeing to learn how I can solve my problems.

I am going to begin (date) _____. I will solve problems by: _____

I will reward myself by feeling good about myself and by: (give yourself something for completing your plan)

_____

_____ _____

My signature Date

_____ _____

My parent's signature Date

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